

RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF December 6, 2012 MEETING

Board Members Present: Steve Durkee and Maureen Martin

Other Committee Members Present: John Flaherty and Paul Harrington

Absent: Michael Lewis; Margaret Holland McDuff; Christopher Kearns; Steve Devine; Kevin Flynn; and Everett Stuart.

Also Present: Raymond Studley, Interim CEO; Linsey Callaghan (for Kevin Flynn); Melissa Long (for Michael Lewis); Mark Therrien; Amy Pettine; Ellen Mandly, members of the Resource Team; and members of the public whose names are on the meeting sign-in sheet.

Chair Steve Durkee called the meeting to order at 8:36 and said he would skip approval of the minutes until more members had arrived and he asked Mark Therrien and Amy Pettine to address the Strategic Plan Update

Ms. Amy Pettine provides a handout of the two year progress report. It is broken down by 5 goals with four categories under each goal. Those categories are: Actions Completed to Date, Ongoing Activities and Future Actions and Challenges/Hurdles to Implementation.

Goal # 1: Service as Rhode Island's Mobility Manager

This is really about coordinating with our entire sister agencies.

Goal # 2: Increasing Ridership

This is really about Customer Service, Marketing, training, enhancements, more community partnerships and making RIPTA easier to use. Some major accomplishments are:

- Buy RIPTA passes online
- E-Newsletter
- Google Transit Feed
- Spanish Translation
- Updated System Map
- Inventory all the bus stops- RIPTA has 5000 stops which are far too many stops. There will be an appendix to service guidelines, our hope to have category based on ridership levels as a first cut. We would like to re-design the bus stop signs and have all route numbers on each sign so each route would have a customized sign.
- Real Time information coming, Paul our ATMS director, been working on 4 locations with real time information signs.

Mr. Steve Durkee states that the experience of being at the bus stop is very much a part of the experience of transit.

Goal # 3: Grow our Transit Network to Expand Mobility and Support Economic Growth.

This goal really revolves around the operations side.

- Service Guidelines are a huge part of this goal.
- We have added Wickford to our existing service.
- R-Line has made huge strides in the past 2 years.
- Grant money to upgrade the bus tunnel.
- Grant money to put into Kennedy Plaza.
- COA is underway and concluding in a few months. Draft presentation by the end of January is our goal at this time.

Mr. John Flaherty is looking at the growing transit network section and asks what the aspirations for the degree of growth are? Was the 10% a preliminary number and where do you see this going?

Ms. Amy Pettine responds that the 10% came from the Metro Transit Study looking at Providence Metropolitan area and overcrowding on urban bus routes. We needed to acknowledge overcrowding, pent up demand service that we may not be currently catching.

As the Strategic Plan started up Warwick was just coming online, Wickford was in the pipeline and the desire for more comprehensive county system.

We knew there was a demand for more service. COA is cost neutral and certainly will help prioritize and identify things we need to change.

Mr. Mark Therrien explains that the 10% was an educated guess and the redistribution from the COA will help. In some cases it may not be a 10% increase in cost, but rather a 10% service area increase.

Mr. Flaherty is now looking at the full document and states that at one time Park and Ride was looking to be doubled and now it just states additional. He questions if there was a change in thinking on this target.

Ms. Pettine responds that the metro Study called for nine additional park and rides which essentially is doubling the number at the time of the study. The COA is looking at them and has done counts and surveys and there will be more specifics to follow as they come up with conclusions.

Mr. Flaherty moves on to address the significant funding shortfall and is concerned that on these new reports the numbers are not present. He agrees with Senator DiPalma that the amount needed for the 5-year plan should be made part of the budget.

Mr. Flaherty is wondering of what has been implanted so far how much grant money has been used for these changes? Taking a look at the 5-year plan he believes there is not sufficient money to make all these proposed changes.

Mr. Therrien explains that there are three different numbers that need to be added up. The first is operating need the second is capital 5 year plan and third the over dependence on federal capital dollars to survive operationally.

Mr. Raymond Studley adds that the Resource Team is here to make operational cuts necessary to move forward. He strongly believes that everyone needs to be on the same page. RIPTA needs a dedicated revenue source and collectively we are coming up with ideas to present to the General Assembly, but we must go as a unit all on the same page, not fragmented.

Mr. Paul Harrington states that last year at the House Finance Committee, they had 35 people give testimony on the O'Grady Bill and not a single person opposed it. He feels confident that this year's legislative session we will have an opportunity to finally jump over obstacle of gasoline tax. He also states that Mr. Studley is correct and we all need to be on the same page. Mr. Harrington believes in the Strategic Planning meetings and we have to have a vision of where mass transit is going. Park and Ride should be encouraged by the Planning committee and the Board. It is a premium ride with premium revenue.

Mr. Flaherty states that from a CTC perspective there needs to be some quantification of what it will cost to implement the strategic plan. They are moving forward with meeting with the Governor and Speaker of the House in the days to follow. We really would like to get the ball rolling with this and would need a target number RIPTA is looking for.

Mr. Durkee agrees with Mr. Flaherty, we should have a number for what these things are going to cost.

Ms. Pettine is a little leery of putting a number to it seeing how there have been so many changes to the plan already.

Mr. Flaherty states that we are two years in to our 5 year plan. He understands the challenges of pinning it down to an exact amount, but many we can get a range for capital and operating.

Mr. Studley states we need to take care of our in house fiscal operating budget first and then once we do that it will show we have a due diligence to that process and being fiscally responsible with the existing funds even if they are not sufficient. If RIPTA shows fiscal responsibility as an Authority we have more of an avenue to look at with the 5 year plan.

Mr. Flaherty and the CTC would like the board to support the Bill that will get submitted this year. He asks the board members present today to start the conversations with the other board members.

Ms. Pettine mentions that Goal # 5 is in regards to Sustainable Funding and feels that this area has been discussed and will leave the bullet points for the committee to read on their own.

Mr. Durkee suggests we move to item 3 on the Agenda: Draft Service Guidelines

Ms. Pettine goes over PowerPoint Presentation.

Mr. Durkee states that the State Guide Plan is so important and need other State and economic development and planning agencies to coordinate with transit.

Mr. Harrington stated that if a bus is overcrowded it will pass by people and that is a problem. He is very happy COA has done so far and they have really addressed the overcrowding issue.

Conversation begins on Performance and Mr. Harrington states that Rhode Island is one out of two states that provide a Statewide System for transportation. Convenience is key to ridership.

Ms. Cameron asks if there is talk of changing from one state Fare Rate and Ms. Pettine answered maybe in the future, but not right now. Mr. Therrien went on to say that collecting a different Fare Rate can create problems. You can charge a different rate if it is truly an Express Service.

Mr. Harrington believes we could offer a premium pass for a premium ride where we offer Wi-Fi and comfortable seats.

Ms. Pettine explains the need to balance coverage of Rhode Island verses the demand driven areas. This aspect can become difficult from a Public Relations standpoint. Mr. Durkee wonders if in heavy transit areas we can go to 1000ft between stops. 600ft still seems awfully close. You lose 8-10seconds every time you stop. Mr. Studley agrees with fewer stops because it is usually when a bus is stopping or trying to get back into traffic that accidents occur. Mr. Therrien explains really cannot go further than 900ft, but we already have taken stops on Atwells from 200ft-660ft. At this time they would not suggest making it longer because have to keep in mind that these people are already walking to the bus stops and this would add to their walk significantly. They are working on Boxing out the stops or have curb extensions. The other thing is having a shelter at the bus stops will help the riders who do have a longer walk to get to a Bus stop.

Ms. Pettine states that a big factor in time is riders who use cash. It is 19 seconds for each person who boards with cash.

Mr. Flaherty motions to send these recommendations to the Board of Directors and Mr. Harrington seconds the motion. The Motion is passed unanimously.

Discussion begins on how often this Committee should meet. They will schedule a meeting again for next month.

A motion is made to table the approval of the March 2012 Minutes till the next meeting. Mr. Flaherty makes the motion and Mr. Harrington seconds it. The Motion is passed unanimously.

Mr. Durkee asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Flaherty made the motion which was seconded by Mr. Harrington. The motion was unanimously approved and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Marie DiToro

Recording Secretary

(Transcribed from a recording of the meeting and notes from staffers)